

## VIEWS FROM THE HOME FRONT

Arizona Transformed by World War II



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As the 20<sup>th</sup> century dawned in Arizona, the U.W. military presence was diminishing because the last campaigns against the Apaches ended in 1886, and only a few forts remained open. The military presence in the state waxed and waned during the years 1910-1920 due to the Mexican Revolution and World War I. These events affected the state's economy and population, but not nearly to the extent World War II did. Arizona remained rural, sparsely populated and dependent on the extractive industries of mining and agriculture from 1912-1941. Diverse groups, such as Mexican immigrants and migrants from other states, contributed to these areas of the economy. The Great Depression brought economic challenges to Arizonans and public works programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps--one of the largest-- that was run by the US Army.

Bombing of Pearl Harbor leads to great fear of an invasion of the West Coast and/or Arizona. It also led to a huge increase in the state's civil defense organization. Racist propaganda directed at those of Japanese heritage sets the stage for the majority population's acceptance of Japanese American relocation.



As the tide of the European and African war turned against the Axis, beginning in 1942, tens of thousands of German and Italian prisoners began falling into allied hands. President Roosevelt agrees to begin bringing POWs to the United States. Arizona would be the site of 23 of these camps; prisoners would become a common sight in the major towns and cities in the United States. In Arizona, the POWs would be crucial in alleviating the labor shortage created by the war effort (in such areas as agriculture and canal maintenance). The POWs would harvest a large percentage of Arizona's cotton crop. Camp Papago Park would gain nationwide attention as the site of the largest mass escape of POWs in the United States.



Civilians of all ages and ethnic groups contribute to the war effort through rationing, recycling, conducting bond drives and aiding soldiers. Civilians and soldiers interact in various canteens that are segregated by race. Women are highly involved in supporting the war effort on the Home Front, working through dozens of women's organizations while also coping with difficult family changes. The war leads to important changes in the Phoenix City government after the December 1942 "purge" of members of city government. The Mexican and U.S. governments cooperate as Mexican workers aid the war effort by working in the fields.



When America entered the war in December 1941, it was vastly unprepared to field an effective fighting force in the Pacific and European theaters. After World War One, the United States had adopted a policy of isolation and had allowed its military to become almost non-existent. After Pearl Harbor, a military build-up began that was unprecedented in American history. Troops and airmen needed to be trained by the hundreds of thousands. Army and aviation installations began springing up all across America. Since the first American offensive of the war would take place in North Africa, a suitable training area was needed.

In 1942, the largest military training center in the world opened in the deserts of southeastern California and western Arizona. Air power would play a vital role in the defeat of the Axis. Thousands of aviation personnel needed to be trained. Because of its clear weather and vast stretches of flat, unpopulated land, Arizona was an ideal location for military aviation training bases. By the end of the war, Arizona had over 60 military airfields and 3 1/2 million acres of land being used for pilot, gunnery and bombardier training. Arizona was the site of the two largest flight training centers in the country: Luke and Marana Army Air Fields.



Arizona's congressional delegation and the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce work together to bring defense industries to the Phoenix metropolitan area, such as Goodyear, Alcoa, and AiResearch. White women and minorities move into higher paying industrial jobs in defense industries and augment their numbers in professional and clerical fields. Mining expands throughout the state to meet defense needs for copper, zinc, lead and Molybdenum. Arizona leads the nation in the production of copper, vital metal with numerous military uses. The economy grows and overcrowding occurs in Phoenix and smaller mining towns as defense workers pour into the state.



The G.I. Bill, sponsored by Arizona Senator Ernest McFarland, provides funding for veterans to attend college, secure housing and employment assistance. Events that occurred during the war lead to great changes in central Arizona's environment, economy and population during the postwar period. The environment is damaged during the economic and population expansion. Participation in the war effort leads to increased determination among minority groups to push for equal status. Using the G.I. Bill, minority men and women pursue advanced training and college degrees--while also beginning to push for increased civil rights. The great majority of women workers are pushed out of nontraditional jobs; they return to "feminized" positions or homemaking.

